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Feature



Secretary Clinton: Travel to Qatar and Saudi Arabia

Secretary of State Hillary Clinton traveled to **Qatar** and **Saudi Arabia** February 13-16.

In Qatar on February 14, she met with Amir Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani, as well as Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Hamad bin Jassim Al-Thani. Secretary Clinton also spoke at the U.S.-Islamic World Forum, hosted by the Qatari Government and the Saban Center on the evening of February 14.

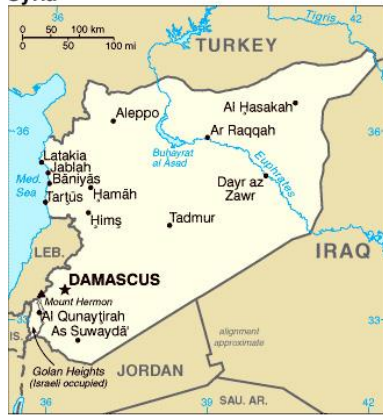
During her February 15-16 visit to Saudi Arabia, Secretary Clinton met with King Abdullah bin Abdul Aziz Al Saud as well as Foreign Minister Prince Saud Al-Faisal. [Read More](#) | [Interactive Travel Map](#) | [Answers From Text the Secretary](#) | [Photo Gallery](#)

Trip Highlights

- [Remarks at Dar Al-Hekma College Town Hall](#)
- [Remarks at the U.S.-Islamic World Forum](#)
- [Remarks with Saudi Foreign Minister Saud Al Faisal](#)
- [Remarks with Qatari Foreign Minister Sheikh Hamad bin Jassim Al Thani](#)

INTERNATIONAL

Syria



Building Better Relations with Syria

"Syria plays an important role in the Middle East and this is a moment in which both Syria and the U.S., despite our differences, have a stake in exploring ways in which we might cooperate."

DAMASCUS, SYRIA, FEB. 17-- Following a meeting with Syrian President Dr. Bashar al-Assad, the Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs, William Burns, delivered remarks on Middle East Peace. In his remarks, he conveyed President Obama's continuing interest in building better relations with Syria based upon mutual interest and mutual respect. The White House recently announced the nomination of Robert Ford to be the next American ambassador to Syria. "That is a clear sign, after five years without an American ambassador in Damascus, of America's readiness to improve relations, and to cooperate in the pursuit of a just, lasting and comprehensive peace between Arabs and Israelis with progress on all tracks of the peace process and in the pursuit of regional peace and stability," Burns said.

[Read More](#)

Arms Trade Treaty

"I know that conventional arms have gotten much less attention even though they kill more people every year than nuclear, chemical, or biological weapons. I am here to make sure that everyone knows that the United States is strongly committed to addressing the problems posed by the irresponsible transfers of conventional weapons."

WASHINGTON, DC, FEB. 18 -- Ellen Tauscher, Under Secretary for Arms Control and International Security discussed the United States' arms control and nonproliferation agenda at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

Undersecretary Tauscher said, "we will work between now and the UN Conference in 2012 to negotiate a legally binding Arms Trade Treaty (ATT)..." and explained in practical terms why the United States is committed to a legally binding measure to better international arms control transfers across international borders. [Read More](#)

The Second Annual Nuclear Deterrence Summit

"There is nothing contradictory about decreasing the size and role of our nuclear weapons and increasing our confidence in our deterrent. Our growing knowledge of the reliability of our stockpile, through our stewardship efforts, enables us to safely continue reducing the number of weapons that are the legacy of the Cold War. Too many weapons of that era remain even though the Soviet Union no longer exists and even though we're moving from an era of Mutually Assured Destruction to, Sergei, an era of Mutually Assured Stability."

ALEXANDRIA, VA, FEB. 17 -- Ellen Tauscher, Under Secretary for Arms Control and International Security addressed the Annual Nuclear Deterrence Summit at the Hilton Alexandria Mark Center Hotel. She said, "My core message is always the same. The Obama Administration will work to reduce the role and numbers of nuclear weapons worldwide while ensuring that our nuclear deterrent is safe, secure, and effective so long as nuclear weapons exist." [Read More](#)

Anti Piracy Efforts

"We seek to manage the consequences...as they relate to piracy and the disruption to trade in the region, as well as the human cost that this imposes upon Somalia and seafarers."

WASHINGTON, DC, FEB. 18 -- Thomas Countryman, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for Political-Military Affairs discussed the U.S. Government's counter-piracy efforts and specifically the work of the Contact Group on Piracy off the Coast of Somalia that met January 28 in New York.

Mr. Countryman led the U.S. delegation to the Contact Group plenary session. The Bureau of Political-Military Affairs has been working hard to build a truly whole-of-government solution to piracy, convening experts from several bureaus within the Department, and bringing the issue to the table with the Department of Defense, the Coast Guard, other agencies across the U.S. Government, ultimately to build a unique partnership against this shared security challenge with more than 50 countries and international organizations that participate in the Contact Group. [Read More](#)



Situation in Haiti: One Month Later

"One month on, where are we? I think we are in a very good place in terms of food distribution and water distribution and getting medicines out to needy hospitals."

WASHINGTON, DC, FEB 12 -- Kenneth Merten, U.S. Ambassador to Haiti participated in a briefing with members of the press corps to give a sense from the field of what is happening in Haiti, how Haiti has been able to cope and begin to recover from the devastating earthquake a month ago. "Obviously, we face ongoing challenges. I think our next issues we're most concerned about are sanitation issues and shelter issues, particularly regarding short-term shelter," said Ambassador Merten. [Read More](#) | [Read More](#) | [Op-Ed](#) | [Foreign Press Center Briefing](#) | [Release of Americans from Haiti](#)

DipNote: Haiti's Agriculture Focus: Enhance Food Security, Generate Income, Create Jobs

[Ertharin Cousin's](#) U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Agencies in Rome discussed Haiti, one month after the Earthquake disaster, on the State Department's Blog.

WASHINGTON, FEB. 19 -- On the one month anniversary of the tragic earthquake in Haiti, high-level representatives gathered in Rome to witness the unveiling of Haiti's new agriculture plan. The plan was presented by Haiti's Agriculture Minister, Joanas Gue, who noted at the outset of his presentation that Haiti's planting season is set to begin next month, and thus urgent steps need to be taken now to ensure that Haitian farmers are prepared and receive the necessary support... [Read More](#)

GLOBAL ISSUES AFFECTING THE NATION

From Bondage to Freedom: The Fight to Abolish Modern Slavery

"Let me be clear: human trafficking is sexist, racist, environmentally degrading, and economically destabilizing. Its presence undermines the rule of law and its perpetrators are guilty of the most heinous human rights abuses any of us could imagine. But human trafficking around the world is not something we can address only by ridding the world of sexism and racism, of poverty, conflict, corruption, or human rights abuses. Nor is it a cultural phenomenon that can only be tackled with education and awareness building."

BOSTON, MA, FEB. 18 -- Luis CdeBaca, Director of the U.S. Department of State's Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons discussed the United States' efforts to combat modern day slavery at the John F. Kennedy, Jr. Forum, hosted by Harvard University's Institute of Politics. He said, "It has now been 10 years since the passage of the Trafficking Victims Protection Act. Ten years since the adoption of the United Nations Protocol that guides our response to modern slavery by mandating that human trafficking must be confronted by working for more and better Prosecutions, increased victim Protection, and ultimately, Prevention of this heinous crime – the "3P Paradigm." [Read More](#)



Day of the Women of the Americas

WASHINGTON, DC, FEB. 18 -- Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton released a statement honoring women of the Americas:

"On this Day of the Women of the Americas, I am proud to honor the women of the hemisphere who are working every day to build a better future for themselves, their families, and their societies. Unfortunately, in too many parts of our hemisphere and beyond, women are still denied rights, deprived of dignity, and marginalized in the political, social, and economic spheres. The Organization of American States has designated 2010 as the Inter-American Year of Women, making this an important opportunity to redouble our efforts to ensure that women are accorded equal rights, opportunities and respect. Empowering women is a high-yield investment that results in stronger economies, more vibrant societies, healthier communities, and greater peace and stability." [Read More: Full Statement](#)

United States and Germany Sign First Science and Technology Agreement

WASHINGTON, DC, FEB. 18 -- The Governments of the United States and Germany held a Science and Technology Agreement signing ceremony at the U.S. Department of State. Deputy Secretary of State James Steinberg signed the agreement on behalf of the United States. This bilateral umbrella science and technology agreement will facilitate the initiation and implementation of future activities between German and American scientists by providing an overall framework for cooperation. The agreement will also serve as a mechanism to address any obstacles to cooperation, as well as bring various agencies and research institutes together to address cross-cutting scientific issues while providing mutual scientific, social, and economic benefits. [Read More](#)

INSIDE THE BELTWAY

An Open Door to Open Government

"My Administration is committed to creating an unprecedented level of openness in government. We will work together to ensure the public trust and establish a system of transparency, public participation, and collaboration." -President Barack Obama, January 21, 2009



The [Open Government Directive](#) and the Progress Report to the American People lay out how the Obama Administration is breaking down long-standing barriers between the Federal government and the people it serves. The Directive instructs agencies to take immediate, specific steps to open their doors and data to the American people.

President Obama signed the [Memorandum on Transparency and Open Government](#) as his first executive action, ushering in a new era of open and accountable government meant to bridge the gap between the American people and their government.

Agencies have created their own web pages to serve as gateways for implementation of the [Open Government Directive](#) | [State.gov/open](#)

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